

VIA PACIS



vol. 8, no. 5

A Word of Freedom and Christian Love

REGARDING THE RECENT PASTORAL LETTER BY THE NICARAGUAN BISHOPS' CONFERENCE

Declaration of the Jesuit Delegate in Nicaragua with his Council of Advisors

(Editor's Note: In our last issue we printed the Nicaraguan Bishops' Pastoral Letter on Reconciliation. The following is the response of the Nicaraguan Jesuits to that letter. We print portions of it because we believe it speaks authoritatively and powerfully of the situation in which the Nicaraguan people find themselves.)

As religious of the Society of Jesus, "we try to collaborate with the College of Bishops in service to the gospel" . . . We have read the pastoral letter with due respect and we have reflected on it. We want to clearly state, at the beginning of this declaration, the result of our reflection.

We believe that the just defense of our people in the face of U.S. aggression, the diplomatic efforts to stop the aggression, the amnesty that has been decreed--which excludes only a few--for those who have risen up in arms and would put them down, and the cry for peace raised up to God by the believing majority of our people--are a true road toward reconciliation. It seems to us that the pastoral letter proposes another road--an unconditional dialogue with those who have taken up arms, which sacrifices the sovereign rights of Nicaragua and does not mention traditional, valid demands of our faith, prior to and necessary for reconciliation. John Paul II had expressed these last demands in his encyclical letter *Rich in Compassion*:

It is obvious that such a great demand as forgiveness does not nullify the objective demands for justice. Justice, rightly understood, constitutes as it were, the goal of forgiveness. In no passage of the message of the Gospel does forgiveness, nor if you will mercy as its source, mean simply allowing evil, scandal, injury or unjust attacks. In any case, the reparation of evil, scandal, or injury done and satisfaction for grave offenses are conditions for forgiveness.

... (W)e feel it is our duty in freedom to say a few words about some of the themes in this letter.

Living in the midst of current events, it seems that this pastoral letter has had equal or greater resonance among the Nicaraguan people than the pastoral letter of November 17, 1979, on Christian Commitment in the new Nicaragua.

That letter was received as a bold ecclesial word.

It affirmed the duty of the followers of Jesus Christ, members of our church, to be the yeast even in a probable road toward a socialism compatible with faith. It signaled the opportunity to take seriously, in new structural circumstances, the preferential option for the poor. It called on Christians to contribute, with the spirituality of poverty, an austere life to the demands of reconstruction. It defended the path toward a recovered nationality that would be developed without either capitalistic or totalitarian dependencies. This letter was perceived . . . as a model of a historically situated demand of radical Christianity.

The new letter confronts the fundamental Christian demand of forgiveness for our enemies in an hour of division and aggression in which it is difficult to forgive. In our judgment, however, it attributes the causes of enmity to the ultimate roots of selfishness and personal hatred, in such a manner so as to ignore the weight of the structural and historical causes which also give rise to the existence of enmity.

(W)e wish to indicate that we see an important omission. The letter forgets, as we see it, that Nicaraguans not in agreement with the revolutionary process to the point of unleashing an armed counter-revolution, were only able to do this when the current President of the United States signed . . . an order concerning his country's national security, which authorized a covert operation to provide financing, training, and multifaceted support for the counterrevolutionaries. The investigation made public by the Congress . . . have made this clear.

This is also the prevailing international view of the Nicaraguan situation. . . . The counterrevolutionary revolt (is) made possible only by U.S. aid (but it) has not been able to create an internal uprising . . .

In the language of so-called "political realism," President Reagan's order signified first, incursions into Nicaraguan territory with immediate retreat into foreign territory; and second, almost permanent harassment of Nicaragua. In terms of the suffering it has caused the Nicaraguan people, these operations have been translated into the torture and murder of peasants, into multiple kidnappings in the mountains and border towns, and into the already numerous victims of a dirty and cruel war. The 50,000 U.S. fatalities in 10 years in Vietnam represented 2.32 deaths for every 10,000 inhabitants. The 1,500 deaths in just over two years in our country represents 4.58 deaths



for every 10,000 inhabitants.

A world power which dominates the hemisphere in which Nicaragua is located is the one which is trying to impose the law of its own interests on our country. As it tries to achieve this, it has not wavered in resorting to war. Such a terrible instrument makes reconstruction difficult. They do all they can to sow discontent, including mining our ports, aggravating shortages of food, medicine and fuel; and above all, in a country thirsty for peace, they introduce the horrible dynamic of war.

We are aware of the fact that the revolution is not accepted unanimously by all Nicaraguans. . . . We are also aware of certain errors in the revolutionary process: its imperfect freedom of debate, its excessive tendency for bureaucracy, of simplistic anti-religious sentiments of some public servants and ideologues; the abuses and inefficiencies of the network for the distribution and marketing of products, of conflicts between the executive and judicial powers which have led to illegalities, of the insufficient understanding of the difficult ethnic problems of the Atlantic coast, of the negligence in the use of public goods, or the resentment which may be created when the rhetoric of the inevitable social oppositions is exaggerated. Some of these things happen to us since we bear the poverty and backwardness of a Third World country. According to trustworthy accounts, these do not con-

stitute a governmental standard of violating human rights. Besides, many of these mistakes have been recognized and some have been legally punished.

. . . It is significant that when our Bishops published the (Christian Commitment) Pastoral Letter, no private business organization nor opposition political party raised its voice in support. Today, on the contrary, those same ones who have opposed the revolutionary process from the very beginning exult in the Pastoral Letter of Easter Sunday and assert the ecclesial infidelity of those who do not unconditionally accept it.

(Cont. on p.5)

via pacis

VIA PACIS is published every two months by the Des Moines Catholic Worker, Box 4551, Des Moines, IA 50306. Telephone 515-243-0765 or 243-7471. We maintain Lazarus House of Hospitality at 1317 8th St., a temporary shelter for women, couples and families, and Monsignor Ligutti Library and Peace and Justice Center at 1301 8th St.

MASS is celebrated at Lazarus House every Friday, 7:30 PM. A great way to visit the CW.

community



Jim Harrington
Donna Henderson
Patti McKee
Tom Merrigan
Norman Searah
Michael Sprong
Aaron Waters
Sharon Waters



"Therefore choose life so that you and your children will live..."

ANNOUNCEMENTS

KAREN SILKWOOD WEEK

As part of Karen Silkwood Week there will be a walk and rally in Cedar Rapids on November 17th, the tenth anniversary of her death.

The walk will begin at the Duane Arnold Energy, Iowa's only nuclear power plant, and end at Rockwell Collins, Iowa's largest military contractor. Immediately following the walk will be the rally.

Speakers scheduled for the rally include Tony Mazzocchi, former Vice President of Karen Silkwood's Union, Oil Chemical and Atomic Workers' Union. Mazzocchi worked with Silkwood before her death.

For further information, please contact the Cedar Rapids Catholic Worker. (319) 362-9041

A HARVEST OF SHAME, a campaign of civil disobedience at the White House, began October 1st and will continue daily through November 2nd. On Saturday, November 3rd, there will be a final act of massive resistance to complete the witness at the White House. The event is sponsored by the Community for Creative Non-Violence (CCNV), which will provide food, housing, and legal assistance and representation. For further information about this action or any groups from Des Moines who may be participating in it, please contact the Catholic Worker.



Anawim House, the Waukegan Catholic Worker, has printed the third edition of PEACEMAKERS DIRECTORY, a listing of groups and individuals who offer overnight hospitality to folks traveling in the interest of peace and social justice. Persons interested in being included in the directory or in receiving a free copy of it should write to Anawim House, 509 N. Genesee St., Waukegan, IL, 60085.



Resistance Notes

Norman's Notes

In the last Via Pacis, I wrote an article about the Mustard Seed burning down on June 26, 1984. I want to make a correction. The Mustard Seed is not in Worcester as it is written in the article. The Mustard Seed is located on Piedmont Street in Worcester, Mass.

The people there have been serving meals in a tent which they set up near the site. They are planning to rebuild on the same location.

Donations may be sent to:
Mustard Seed Restoration Committee
c/o Roman Catholic Chancery
49 Elm Street
Worcester, Mass.
01609

Besides learning more about the Mustard Seed, I've just learned about Rosie's Place burning down around Easter Sunday. Rosie's Place isn't a Catholic Worker but in some ways it runs like one. It runs a drop-in center during the day and serves as an emergency shelter for poor women in Boston.

On August 15th, Judge Peck sentenced the following people to 20 days suspended sentence/one-year probation, with the stipulation that they not re-enter SAC headquarters, south of Omaha.

Jim Harrington, Des Moines
Sheryl Weaver, Des Moines
Gary Otting, Des Moines
Chris Murphy, Omaha

Dean Denner, of Manhattan, Kansas, pled not guilty; his trial was scheduled for October 2nd.

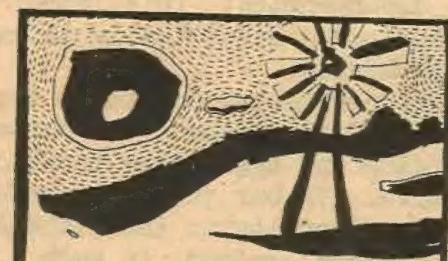
Marcie Friedman, of Madison, Wisconsin, refused to stipulate to the terms of probation and was immediately sentenced to 20 days.

On August 22nd, seven people pled guilty to violating "ban and bar" letters previously issued for trespassing at SAC as an act of conscience. The sentences received were as follows:

Jeanne Peterson, Omaha--\$225 fine;
Mike Polocek, Omaha--\$50 fine;
Kevin Guy, Des Moines--20 days suspended sentence/one-year probation; Scott Palmer, Des Moines--20-days suspended sentence/one-year probation; Liz Soley, Omaha--20-days suspended sentence/one-year probation; and Sarah Paul,

Omaha--60-days suspended sentence/probation. Jeanne and Mike have indicated that they will refuse to pay their fines.

Elaine Bailes-Henry pled not guilty and was scheduled to be tried October 2nd.



A Davenport, Iowa jury found Jim Dubert, Jim Johnson, and Steve Sheridan guilty for their part in the June 4th "Shut Down the Arsenal" action in Rock Island, Illinois. They each received fines of \$20 plus court costs.

NEEDS

Changes of season always catch us by surprise at the Catholic Worker. URGENT APPEAL!

The children have returned to school and the leaves are already falling from the trees. Like many of you we find ourselves facing the coming winter with some apprehension about what needs to be done to our houses before the season sets in.

Two weeks ago, we closed the house for a week to clean, paint and repair, simply to do the things that are nearly impossible while the house is full. We put new carpet (the carpet was new to us!) in some of the bedrooms and just generally spiffed the place up.

During the summer our water bills are our big expenditures, but they don't compare to the monster gas bills we get during the winter. In order to reduce our gas bills we put up plastic on the windows. In order to do this we need a very tall ladder to reach our second story windows. If you have a tall, sturdy ladder which we could use for a weekend or a week, please give us a call. We are also in need of the plastic to cover the windows. If you could help by lending a hand, donating some plastic, or providing a ladder, we would appreciate it. We need you!

The property tax bills came. We survived--just barely.

Once again the truck is out of commission. We did manage to get the steering fixed for less than our worst nightmares--a rare event! But, alas, now it has brake problems. Too, and alas again, while most of us were at the Catholic Worker gathering in Sugar Creek, the battery was stolen from the truck. (But it ain't dead yet!) We are in a quandry as to what to do. If we had an affordable alternative we would get rid of the ol' beater, but we just don't. We do

need a truck suitable for carrying folks, food, furniture, etc. We have used our old clunker for almost anything imaginable--and many things not.

We are also in need of the usual supplies:

MONEY

- garbage bags
- heavy duty garbage cans
- can opener
- bath towels (prefer white)
- mops (string and sponge)
- dish towels
- disposable razors
- toothpaste
- shampoo

FOOD:

- canned veggies
- meat
- canned soups
- macaroni and cheese
- rice
- bread
- sugar
- salt
- pepper
- milk (powdered and real)
- eggs
- tomato paste and sauce
- yeast
- onions
- potatoes
- COFFEE

WE NEED BLANKETS!!!

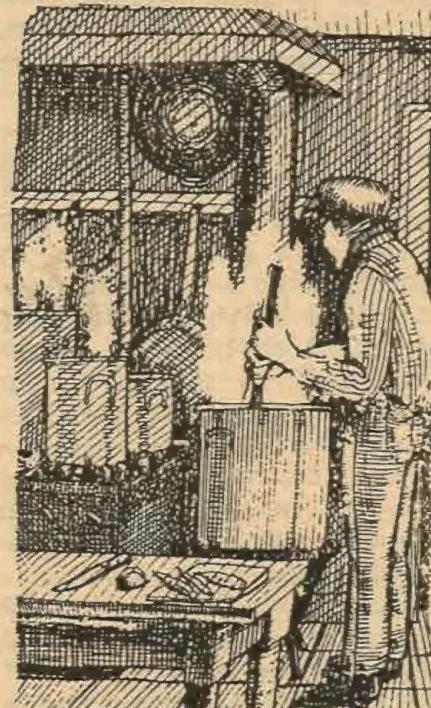
Once again, this year our community with the help of Clark St./Kindred House Community, CROSS Ministries, Trinity United Methodist Church and some other friends are collaborating to open a winter night shelter for single men. From October 1 through May 1, the basement of Trinity United Methodist Church will be the home of approximately 20-25 men a night.

We need your help! We have been scurrying around all summer collecting the necessary materials for the shelter. We are still greatly in need of blankets and foam rubber cushions. Money donations would also be nice to defray the extra cost of utilities to the church. If you can help at all, please do. Unfortunately, over the last year, the need for more shelter has become apparent--especially as the life-threatening winter cold approaches. Help us increase the chances that no one will die in Des Moines this winter because they have no shelter.

Please send any donations to:

Des Moines Catholic Worker
attn. Mike Sprong
P.O. Box 4551
Des Moines, IA 50306

Shalom Christi,
Mike



VOLUNTEERS (to help do some house laundry (blankets and towels), to help cook, to help clean, to help . . .)

THE WORKS OF MERCY
FEED THE HUNGRY.
CLOTHE THE NAKED.
GIVE DRINK TO THE THIRSTY.
VISIT THE IMPRISONED.
CARE FOR THE SICK.
BURY THE DEAD.



THE WORKS OF WAR
DESTROY CROPS AND LAND. SEIZE FOOD SUPPLIES.
DESTROY HOMES SCATTER FAMILIES.
CONTAMINATE WATER. IMPRISON DISSENTERS. INFECT WOUNDS. BURN. KILL THE LIVING.

Rita Corbin

Midwest Gathering

September 14th-16th found approximately eighty Catholic Workers from seven states seeking respite and frivolity in the rolling hills of Sugar Creek, Iowa. The weather cooperated beautifully.

Helen Tichey, Patti McKee, Norman Searah, Sharon and Aaron Waters, Frank Cordaro, tom merrigan, and I, all of the Des Moines CW Community, joined in the fun. Among the seventeen different Catholic Worker communities represented were folks from Minnesota, Wisconsin, Iowa, Illinois, Missouri, Oklahoma, and Texas, all gathered to meet friends, old and new, to share philosophies and struggles, and to have a good time.

Friday night we were welcomed by Worker folk from the Waukegan and Bloomington, Illinois houses, who sponsored this year's "retreat." Naturally, friends from the nearby Davenport and Rock Island communities were there early to assist in giving hospitality to incoming itinerant Catholic Workers.

Saturday morning's pancake breakfast was a good time to meet friends who had arrived in the wee hours of the morning. The group at the retreat house was so large that introductions of the many Worker communities and their members took the rest of the morning.

Saturday afternoon we divided into four groups, initially to discuss the struggle and balance of resistance and hospitality, later to discuss the issue of abortion and hospitality. The struggle and balance of resistance and hospitality is an issue that comes up more in some communities than in others. While generally it was agreed that we engage in a simple (but urgent) form of resistance by our lifestyles of hospitality and simplicity, resistance in the form of nonviolent civil disobedience tends to be more prevalent in communities closer to military installations and defense contractors. We also discussed the importance of the means by which we convey our message in the various



locales that we find ourselves. Radical as our message may appear to others, the means by which we convey remains very, very important.

The abortion issue was discussed in regard to the woman as victim. Although there was some disagreement over the issue itself, there was no disputing the fact that the women who have had abortions were, in fact, victimized by the event. Quite a number of women and a few men present had personally encountered situations in which the woman was in need of a great deal of loving support after having had an abortion. All believed that while abortion is an emotionally charged issue, the call to be Christ-like enjoins us to bring love and concern to all situations. People shared their experiences, feelings, thoughts, and reflections, but the most valuable thing we could offer anyone was love.

The annual talent show featured Don "Big Bwana" Timmerman's "Yes, I'm Really Trying to Be Serious," Cedar Rapid's musical version of "Stone Soup," Bloomington's "Lollipop Kids," Chicago's rendition of "These Are a Few of My Favorite Things," and Des Moines' "Hot Day on the House." Then there was St. Louis, which took home the travelling "Football Mary" trophy. Usually there is earnest competition for the coveted first-place award at this annual event, but this year the one-man St. Louis contingent, who, despite repeated gongs by George Dean of Davenport, refused to sit down (and shut up!), was literally swept away by his animated audience. The award was given in the hope that he would cease his seemingly endless "song" about summer, but more drastic (but nonviolent) measures were finally taken. The Des Moines community would like to take this opportunity to insist that St. Louis return with the much-prized trophy next year. Maybe then you could actually win it rather than being begged to take it.



The remainder of the evening, what little was left of it, was spent together in song and in sharing the year's events.

Sunday morning we gathered for liturgy before packing the cars to leave for home. It is always hard to see Sundays come on these retreats, knowing that it will probably be another year before we see each other again. So many people travel so far to celebrate so much and share together. The experience is refreshingly supportive and celebrative.

Sunday also saw us say our goodbyes to David Stein, a much-missed member of our community, who has decided to make his winter home at St. Francis House in Chicago. David attended the gathering as a "free agent" but decided to return with the Chicago community, who had heartily welcomed him in off the streets this summer. We wish him the best with his new community, knowing our loss to be their gain.

Yes--good people, good weather, good times--God is good!

-Donna Henderson

An Easy Essay

I object to the making of people into objects.
I object to work for pay because the worker is an object-that-works to the boss
and the boss is an object-that-pays to the worker.
I object to commerce-for-money because the buyer is an object-that-buys to the seller
and the seller is an object-that-dispenses-objects to the buyer.
I object to charity because the giver is an object-that-gives to the recipient
and the recipient is to the giver an object into which the giver can pour his/her charity.
The recipient is to the giver a receptacle for the giver's goodness.
The giver does not see that the recipient has goodness of his/her own
that has a right to be brought out and recognized.
Without this their relationship is no higher than that of the boss and the worker or the buyer and the seller.
If people did what their souls told them was good and what their reason told them was necessary instead of doing only what there was an instant reward in doing People would stop turning other people and themselves into objects.

by David Stein

(Jesuit response cont. from p.1)

In 1979, the Bishops called for a "halt to capital flight and an increase in repatriation and reinvestment." Was this call heard in the ranks of the wealthy opposition? By November 14, 1979, those ranks had already produced their first declaration strongly opposing the progress of the revolution. In 1979, the Bishops called for "fairer terms in international commerce and fairer conditions for the renegotiation of Nicaragua's debt." Did the present government of the United States hear this call? Rather, they cut off the shipments of wheat, blocked credits from international bodies, severely cut Nicaragua's sugar quota, etc.

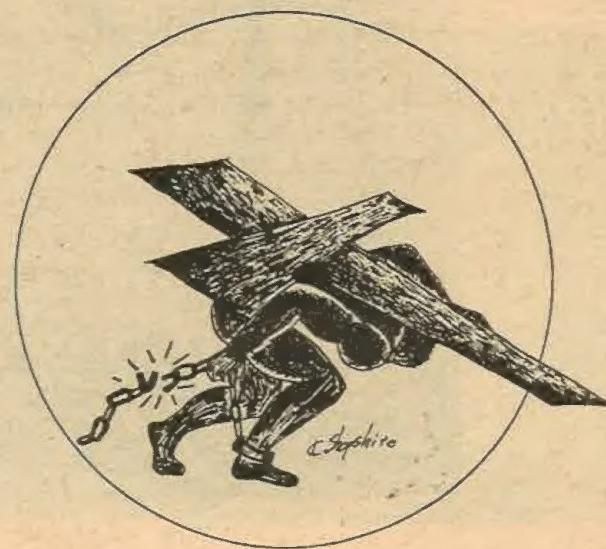
We believe that unconditional dialogue with those who have taken up arms cannot be proposed as a solution to these problems. Yes, it is possible to ask for a conversion which helps to make the revolutionary process more just and which brings us closer to the "new man" which we all want. One can also demand, with a Christian basis, participation in a just war of national defense involving the survival of the widely accepted goal for a new Nicaragua, with a peaceful heart always open to generosity and forgiveness.

Unconditional dialogue with those who have not asked for it, or with those who ask for it while they contrive to kill, cannot be demanded. A dialogue with those who do not put aside their disrespect for Nicaragua's right to full national independence cannot be demanded. Even less can it be required when it is a well-known secret that behind those who attack and kill there is the intransigence and fanaticism of wealth that dominates.

We have taken it upon ourselves to say these words because we believe that the relation between Christian Faith and a process, which though imperfect structurally, tends towards greater justice, is at stake. If there are weeds in the revolutionary process, we must be careful. To pull them out all at once may also cause us to pull out the good seeds of greater justice for those who have always been impoverished and oppressed. If there are seeds of atheism in Nicaragua today, does this justify a complete disqualification of the revolution? We believe, rather, that it is a challenge for the Church, situated more than ever on the side of justice and the hopes of the poor, to purify its countenance and announce to the poor the God of hope. Will the Church be able to be the ferment in this history, which is still being born--barely 5 years old--if because of its forgetfulness and omissions it is culpable of forgetting legitimate national interests?

. . . In Nicaraguan society there are differences of opinion. Accordingly, we in the Nicaraguan Church do not have the same vision of the situation. We believe that dialogue in the Church is urgent. . . .

(O)ur Bishops, in a few lines, draw a condemnatory picture of that which they call "a small part of the Church which has separated itself from the unity." They do not concretely identify this part. The consequence of this might be that any Catholic who in good conscience takes exception to the ethical-religious judgment formulated by our Bishops on the political situation in Nicaragua, could be branded as an outsider to the unity of the Church. This is even more the case insofar as the letter fails to distinguish, in terms of this unity, between doctrinal, liturgical, spiritual, disciplinary, ethical, and socio-political aspects of unity. Has not the time for tolerance of different views arrived, views permitted in the Church on aspects open to discussion and to making distinctions? Might this not be the urgent time for communion and participation, the time for dialogue within the Church, carried out with respect, serenity, and freedom? It seems to us that in order to propose the demand for reconciliation with credibility, the Church should shine as a sacrament of reconciliation Herself.



On the other hand, a pastoral letter like the present one, during times of anti-national aggression, when so many international instances have shown us that it is not aggression but political negotiation which is worthy of the path of peace; a letter which does not mention the Contradora negotiating process, proposed by John Paul II himself, is at this time in danger of breaking a fragile equilibrium. Does it not threaten to cut off all possibilities of dialogue between the revolutionary process and the Catholic Hierarchy? Would it not be more pastoral to do everything possible to prevent this rupture? And to do so before it is too late? And to do this so that history does not repeat itself?

Finally, we want to go on record as rejecting the recourse to insult or the caricature or the evocation of possible weaknesses or vacillations of the past by the means of communication sympathetic to the revolutionary process. [sic] We reject this as a method of political response to the Bishop's Pastoral letter. The importance of its themes calls for a response and a debate worthy of the new Nicaragua.

But even more, we think that the Nicaraguan people, under attack and subjected to conditions of shortage and poverty, need a Christian word of firm condemnation of the internal speculation which increases their poverty and a word of encouragement and hope. A word that invites them one more time to continue to have confidence in the new history which must be constructed in this country and which the people have already begun to build through privation and with heroism.

. . . And we believe that the Nicaraguan Church should ask the Universal Church for efficacious measures of solidarity with this people and relief from their suffering.

*"...the Church
will not hesitate
to take up the cause
of the poor
and to become the voice
of those who are not listened to
when they speak up,
not to demand charity,
but to ask for justice."*

—Pope John Paul II

Only when our cause is the highest cause will all fear be conquered. For if our cause is not the highest cause, if it is a nation or a party, or a movement or a church, and if it is this with which we identify ourselves, then the defeat of our cause is the defeat of ourselves. But if we believe that God is the Ground of all being, we can accept defeat, because in a sense we cannot be defeated.

The conquest of fear is therefore a tremendous consequence of trying to find out what God's cause is--and making it our own.

Our Christian cause could well bring us into conflict with authority, and the only way in which we can overcome (conflict or) the fear of such a prospect is to believe that we are the instruments of God's peace, which means, of course, that we are the instruments of God's love, and because we are used by it, because it dwells in us, we have no cause for fear.

-ALAN PATON

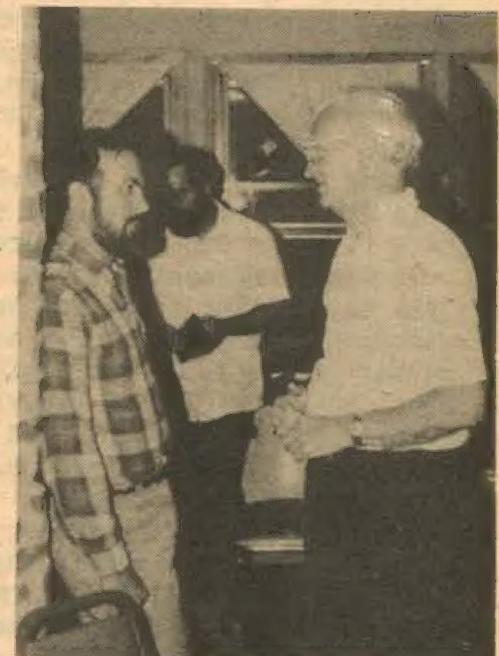


OURSELVES





OUR FRIENDS



National Conference on Non-Violence

by Patty McKee

The five days I spent at the conference, August 5-9, were informative, relaxing and, most of all, renewing. About 150 people from the U.S. and Canada gathered at a church camp nestled in the Black Hills National Forest. People came from various peace and justice groups and communities. We had the common commitment to non-violence, but we had various ways of putting it into practice in our lives. We also had in common that we were seeking more and better ways to put non-violence into practice. The days were structured so we had many options as to what to do. Time was set aside each morning for spiritual renewal. One could choose from a Catholic or a women's ritual group to a nature walk. It was a refreshing way to start the day. After breakfast each day everyone would gather for a seminar on one of the following topics: the roots and principles of non-violence, power and empowerment, and strategies for non-violent action. Small sharing groups would meet afterward to further discuss the morning topic. Narayan Desai, the son of Gandhi's personal secretary, presented the talk on the roots and principles of non-violence. His talk is reprinted in the latest issue of "Ground Zero."

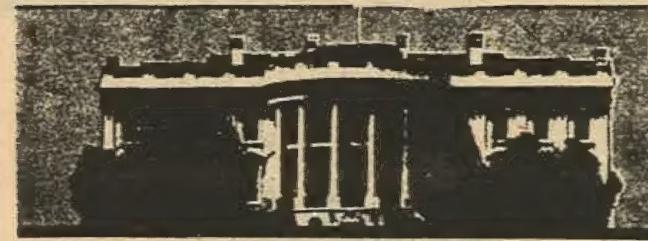
The afternoons were filled with workshops, field trips and recreation time. The workshop selection varied from street theatre for peacemaking to civilian-based defense to community living. The field trips were to Yellow Thunder Camp and to the Indian-owned radio station, KILI on Pine Ridge Reservation. But if one had had his or her fill of information, one could spend the afternoon at the swimming hole or hiking through the woods. This activity was in tune with the focus of the conference. We were encouraged to be at peace with nature as well as with other human beings. Much of this influence came from the Sioux Indians at the Conference, who held mother earth as sacred, especially the Black Hills.

The evenings were entertainment time. The early evening entertainment included American Indian dance, Face-to-Face Drama group that focuses on conflict resolution and a talent show presented by us. Impromptu gatherings formed after that. Most of the closing day was spent at Marv Kammerer's ranch which borders Ellsworth-S.A.C. Airforce base. This base controls our country's B-52 bombers. Marv gave us a brief history of the building of the base and the effect it has had on his life. He also told us how he came to declare his land a nuclear free zone.



On the hillside of his pasture at the end of the base runway, we constructed three medallions of rock. The three symbols--the peace sign, ecology sign, the Indian medicine wheel--were 40 feet in diameter and painted white, so they could be seen by the pilots as they landed and took off at Ellsworth. The closing ceremony of the Conference was a blessing of each of the symbols. The whole action was so powerful, because factors of life and death meet at the fence of the base.

In the closing plenary session people were chosen to compile a statement from the conference which is forthcoming. It was also decided to have 6-7 regional non-violence conferences next year followed by another national conference in 1986. +



PRAYER IN PROTEST

Recent political posturing about whether or not prayer in public schools should be public, private, or prohibited prompts me to share the following experience and its afterthoughts.

On the third Sunday of this summer's August my good friend George Dean and I strolled along the public path on the Rock Island Arsenal, a large munitions depot located on an island in the Mississippi River, between Rock Island and Davenport.

When George and I reached a flagpole along the path, we paused to pray the "Our Father" and the "Prayer of St. Francis," whose first line is "Lord, make me an instrument of your peace." George finished before I did and walked on ahead, but I was interrupted by a security officer who demanded some identification from me. As I turned to hand him my driver's license I descried the base police car with flashing red light atop and wondered what all the hullabaloo was about.

"Is something wrong?" I asked?
"Well, I thought you might have been praying."

"Is that wrong?"
"Well, 18 U.S.C. 1382 prohibits public prayer on the Arsenal." He went on to tell me that in the past local peace groups had gathered about the flagpole to pray for peace but had since been barred from re-entering the Arsenal. I then confessed that I had in fact been praying and was immediately taken into custody.

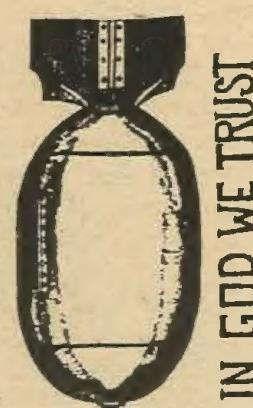
Inside an Arsenal security office three uniformed men making a concerted effort to appear very authoritarian asked me what "business" I had on the Arsenal. I explained that I had been going for a walk and had stopped in front of the flagpole to pray for peace. I was then asked if I was willing to leave and, never having intended to take up residence on the Arsenal, replied I was. Was I willing to leave immediately and peacefully? Sure, I said, but my questions as to why I was not allowed to pray before the flag were ignored. Instead I was locked inside an Arsenal security car and summarily chauffeured off the island, all the while being warned that should I re-enter the Arsenal to pray I would be "subject to apprehension and prompt delivery to civil authorities for prosecution."

Afterwards I wondered whether I would have been treated differently had I said that, rather than praying for peace, I was beseeching God for a speedy victory by the U.S.-backed contras over the Sandinistas in Nicaragua, or for the re-election of President Reagan. I wondered, too, whether the Pledge of Allegiance was not itself a prayer, with its allegation about the United States being "one nation, under God." Would I have been permitted to recite it before the flag, or to have sung "God Bless America"? In retrospect, and perhaps more apropos, would it have been unlawful to have sung "America, the Beautiful," whose second stanza concludes:

"America! America! God mend thy e'er flaw,
Confirm thy soul in self-control,
Thy liberty in law."

It strikes me as bizarre that while at the same time Ronald Reagan wants the federal government to institutionalize prayer in public schools, public prayers for peace at the Rock Island Arsenal, a federal institution open to the public, are prohibited. Then again, this same president has bestowed the name "Peacekeeper" upon the MX-missile, which, with its 10-warhead arsenal, would carry more than 20 times the destructive force of the atomic bomb dropped on Hiroshima. So, it seems public prayers for peace threaten peace while threatening nuclear annihilation keeps the peace for which we pray. Well, this is 1984: maybe it's not so bizarre. +

-tom merrigan



Reflections from the Living Room

By Donna Henderson

I sit with pensive brow in our smoke-filled living room wondering what our guests think about our neighborhood and our home. A conversation with several acquaintances had recently made me more conscious of how others perceive the area in which we live and which we, for the most part, take for granted. I had never been so conscious of the fact that I was living in a neighborhood that others considered bad. Like a child who suddenly becomes aware of the fact that he or she is considered poor by others, my perception of my home and my lifestyle had changed somehow, not dramatically but somehow it was different.

Our activities around our home do not differ greatly from other peoples. On summer evenings we sit on our porch until late at night discussing the day's events and solving the world's problems. Our summer days are spent working in the garden and the yards, as well as on our houses. Granted, we share our home with more people than an average household might invite to a party, but the tasks remain the same: There are meals to cook, bathrooms to clean, floors to vacuum, laundry to wash, and beds to make. Pretty standard fare. It is easy to get caught up in all the goings on and never realize how weird we look to the outside world. The way other people spoke about our neighborhood made me feel "weird."

After hearing the feelings of people who did not live in our neighborhood, I began to listen more closely to those who do. I heard the children first. They too said they lived in a "bad" neighborhood. Initially, it seemed to be an excuse to use our yard as an alternative to the trash can, but then I listened more carefully. The children had been told they lived in a "bad" neighborhood, and that the people who lived in it were bad and dangerous. They and their friends lived in the neighborhood, yet they had assimilated the outsider's view of their neighborhood and themselves. They believed, and probably are right, that others perceive them as bad. Their neighborhood was undesirable, and so were they.

The adults whom I heard speak of the neighborhood had much the same view, but in general they no longer had the energy to make the "bad" good. They lived in a bad neighborhood. Their relationships with their neighbors reflected this resignation. Others were to be approached with fear and suspicion rather than neighborly cheer. If the adults wanted to do anything, they usually sought to escape that which they and others perceived as bad. The "bad" people were the ones who stayed.

I question the cause of the pervasive fear that surrounds certain neighborhoods. The impact of the image of our neighborhood on its people—children, parents, grandparents, men and women of every age, race, and religion—has startled me. I am angered when people scoff at the fact that I have walked, in broad daylight, to the university, the church, or wherever. I can see how they have closed their eyes to the injustice and, as a result, the injustice flourishes.

What do they fear? Do they fear that which they would be capable of doing if injustice forced them to live in an area which others perceived as "bad" or somehow evil?



How do Christian eyes see Sixth Avenue, or even Eighth Street? Do they see families struggling to stay together despite the A.F.D.C. rules? Do they see children clinging to their dignity in a culture that tells them they live in a bad neighborhood and, therefore, they will grow up to be bad adults? Do they see the fear on the faces of the elderly who feel as if they have been abandoned? Do they see fathers who were at one time able to provide for their family, but now are without a job? Do they see mothers whose children have been taken away from them because a social worker believes the apartment for which they have been paying \$180 a month is uninhabitable? Do they see the alcoholic's stupor as a means to fill the emptiness that robbed him or her of dignity long before the bottle did? Do they see the prostitute's dependence on her pimp as the more comfortable alternative to the mission?

The tragedy is that the seeds of these negative attitudes are sown by those who fear, and in fear they avoid their neighbor, thus preventing any demonstration of the good that lies within. Fear is easy to sow, and it is sown as easily here as anywhere. I ask, though, why these seeds are sown by those who perceive the evil in our neighborhood yet who fail to perceive the evil in the affluence of West Des Moines or Urbandale.

Recently I had occasion to ponder God's promise delivered by Ezekiel:

The lost I will seek out,
the strayed I will bring
back, the injured I will
bind up, the sick I will
heal (but the sleek and
the strong I will destroy),
shepherding them rightly.

(Ez 34:16)

Who are the "sleek and the strong"? Did God's preoccupation with and favor for the poor end with the Coming of Christ? Who are the "rich he has sent away empty" (Lk 1:53)? Are we not rich Christians in a world of poverty? Are we not the "thie(ves) and marauder(s)" (Jn 10:1)?

Am I being too hard? What is it to find Christ in others? And where do we find those others? Do we fear Christ on the Near-North Side and embrace him in Beaverville?

People we do not even know are touched by our attitudes. Children grow up thinking they too will be bad. Adults become tired of trying to prove they are good to those who will not venture to see. Neighborhoods succumb to outsiders' perceptions. Policies and economies are shaped by gloomy expectations.

Where does one find Christ? I do believe Christ is in West Des Moines and Urbandale; indeed, Christ is in all people. Some say Christ is more difficult to find on the Near-North Side. I must disagree. I struggle to find Christ in the rich neighborhoods. Christ did not shun the wealthy; the wealthy shunned Christ. He testified to the Truth. They did not want truth. They had invested themselves in a reality which satisfied them and distinguished them from others. They were the ones who set the standards and prescribed the laws. The poor, on the other hand, flocked to Christ. Their poverty was apparent, usually manifesting itself economically and physically; their flaws uncovered, their dignity stripped away. It is the same today. Their condition is condemned, and so is their neighborhood.



TO BE A WITNESS
does not consist in
engaging in propaganda
nor even in stirring
people up, but in being
a living mystery.
It means to live in such
a way that one's life
would not make sense
if God did not exist.

CARDINAL SUHARD

Letter to a Friend

-Carmen Trotta

"It is not allowed to give up." If I could read the silence of Jesus as he makes his dolorous way towards his execution, that is the look he turns on us. We are not allowed to give up. I read the look in spite of myself, I cannot understand.

Not giving up; no great message for sophisticated Christians in an advanced culture. Everything, every ad, every political pronunciamento, every hype, flash bulb, successful face, all assure us, we've made it, we have a better evangel than that, a more refined "spirituality," a gospel in tune with our intellects, our egos, our gross products [sic], a gospel less abusive, edgy, primitive.

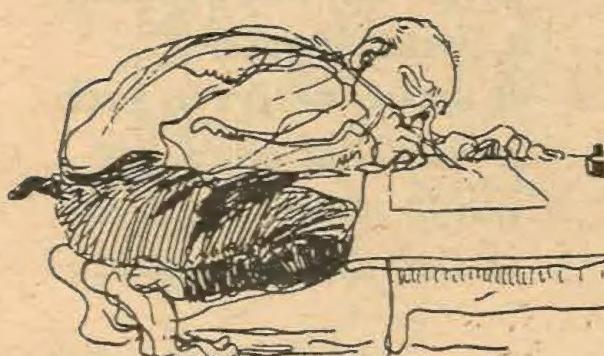
Do not give up. Not much of a command, nothing attractive, negative, a burden, a pain. Hardly calculated to make a noise in the great world, or bring disciples or a cash flow.

Still, given the times, given the nukes, given the waste of talent and brains in slavery to extinction, given the dying poor and the tottering social system, given Reaganmadness, given this (and more to come)--not such a bad gospel after all.

-Daniel Berrigan,

Mingled with strains of anger, despair and frustration I've developed a strain of respect for street women. When men lose all self-respect, all human dignity, they resort to anger and violence. Often the street women are the butt of this violence. In any case, the men release their anger, regain their balance; it seems the women suffer in silence. It's so plain to see. Their eyes say so much. Eyes that have long ago emptied themselves of all tears, remain dark, somehow empty . . . silently screaming. Stripped naked, all innocence gone, only with each other do they share a genuine laugh or smile. When they turn to face the world, they shift to automatic pilot ("well-rehearsed ad-lib lines"), hearts and minds turned off. Are all of these impenetrable, unsavable, long dead? The suffering servants of our time. Or are they slaves? Or does it make a difference? Once again the Pharisees, chief priests and co. miss the point, fail to see. Allow me crucifixion.

I've made friends with an old Black woman. We've begun taking evening walks together. She's 49, looks 69. A battered wife. Tough woman. Curses, laughs--but how she cries each time she talks to me. A possible thawing out? Springtime, new life? She's alcoholic, too. Can we overcome that, too? No doubt we started her on it. Perhaps if we could only love as genuinely as we hate. Or ignore? Or does it make a difference?



It occurred to me the other day that if we listened intently enough we might be able to filter out the drone of our electric lights, cars, factories, appliances, etc., and hear the still small voice. Then, perhaps, our youth would find better things to do than pretend to have a good time in bars, "chicks pickin' up dudes, dudes scoping chicks." Perhaps maturity would no longer be seen as a stage after college (or high school) but, rather, as a process, without a foreseeable end.

If we would all just listen, perhaps we could see the cathedrals with new eyes, recognize them for the first time: such a powerful potential so long unnoticed, made a mockery of; timeless beauty covered in fashionable garb; gaudy; laughable; lamentable. Perhaps, too, we could rid ourselves of Sunday's dull habit, and give the Sabbath back to humankind; then we might refresh ourselves. Maybe we'll even be able to give one another the sign of peace without being embarrassed. Or is it guilty? Or does it make a difference?

So the question arises: What do I do when I arrive at home? It'll be nice at first, but then love gets painful. I'd like to open up another house, a Worker. Maybe I should clear my head a bit first. Or is that going numb? I know that makes a difference!

Got a phone call today. Head of social services at Broadlawns Medical Center. Enjoyed my article but didn't care for my appraisal of social services. Hey, I drew blood--it's a sign of life, anyway. I tried to explain to him that it was nothing personal--really. The whole mess is communal. The fact that social services exists is a sin. "No comfort, no understanding, no love." This is not an attack but a statement of an inevitable fact. Systems, bureaucracies, organizations run almost entirely on inertia--and money. But you can't systematize love, nor can you pay someone to do it. It really demands a personal touch. Read on: "The state can provide loving, personal care only as well as it can 'visit the prisoner'--that is, it cannot!"

Mike and I went dumpstering the other day. Forced depression. Disgust. Gave the Register a call--poof! A full pantry for the first time since I've been here. Two paragraphs of print and a flood of food. For a minute it was heartwarming. Then I remembered it was a trap: demanded by expediency, perhaps; successful, but in the long run of little worth. A quick fix, a lie, a conscience easer. An injection won't do. This illness needs constant and long-term attention; those in authority say it will be with us forever. We need some real dedicated people, a change of means.

Mike and I got a chance to do some C.W. indoctrination for half an hour on some local radio station's NAACP report. Mike told them to organize; I told them no political solution would ever work. Mike told them the poor were not as depraved as we like to make them; I told them some are, but what difference does it make? Mike said the state wasn't doing its job; I said the Church wasn't doing its job, even letting the state take over. A paradoxical mix. Sort of

like Dorothy Day and Peter Maurin. Immediate, practical, perhaps more loving; and long-term, strengthening, theoretical. I even quoted Peter.



Fritz Eichenberg

If we would all just listen, perhaps our priests would be able to speak clearly--instead of fumbling, trying to make scripture relevant--without the fear of offending their listeners or themselves. It's embarrassing to watch them up there--"all dressed up and no place to go"--same old shit everyday, searching, grasping at random. Thank God for fillers--"grace," "faith," "truth," "glory"--not too nutracious, but filling.

Sorry about the way I wrote all this--all fragments--but that's the way I'm thinking. Also sorry because I know it sounds real bitter--it is--which is totally unchristian--so I have a lot to learn.

(Carmen was a much-valued--and now a much-missed--member of our community this past summer. The above is from a letter to a friend. In September he returned to Long Island to live near his parents and to start another Catholic Worker. We wish him well and remember him in our prayers. Don't give up, Carmen--you already have made a difference.)



HAPPY HALLOWEEN

Gazing out the window i see the late September leaves reluctantly let loose their once resolute attachment to the trees. The iridescent panoply with which they blanket the fall trees is, i feel, their way of giving thanks to the source of their nourishment. Accompanying my afternoon reverie are remembrances of sights, sounds, and smells of autumns past: piles of raked russet leaves cushioning children's acrobatic tumbles; soft soughs of rustling leaves still suspended from swaying branches; and smoky charcoal aromas of burning leaves becoming earth and air again. Along with these attendants of autumn i also associate Halloween, but it is of its purport rather than of its pumpkins that i wish to write.

Halloween is the evening of October 31, followed by All Saints' Day, or Allhallows. Etymologically the word is a potent one, contracted from the Old English "all hallow even." It is an especially potent word for Christians because it should remind us not only that all of us are called to holiness, but that all of us are holy, made so by God via the Incarnation. If the Incarnation has any meaning for me at all it is not that every day is Christmas. Who among us would not welcome Jesus if he came as the Christ of the Sacred Head Surrounded whom the angels greet with anthems sweet? Rather, it is that the Incarnation has made every day Halloween, for we are all hallowed by it.

Throughout the ages the Incarnation has been so thoroughly theologized that it has become one more bit of credal theospeak, ranking right up there with such other esoterica as "Epiphany," "Corpus Christi," and "Transfiguration." But the revelation of God is not principally to be found in abstract contemplation of soteriological dogmas, but in the example and imitation of the life of Jesus. Love is his sign and by that sign we shall be known as Christ's followers, "crazy for Christ." Love is not only his sign but the very essence of discipleship, of Christ following, for it is the essence of Jesus' relationship to God.

My dear people,
let us love one another
since love comes from God
and everyone who loves is
begotten by God and knows
God. (1Jn 4:7)

i remember having been impressed by this line from Dr. Zhivago: "As it says in a liturgy for the Feast of the Annunciation, Adam tried to be like God and failed, but now God was made man so that Adam should be made God." If the divine has been made fleshly, it is evident how we in turn can be born of God, how we are born of God. The Incarnation is an everyday because Jesus is incarnate in everyone of us every day. By this indwelling, this presence, Jesus has extended to us fellowship with himself and thus with God, a fellowship that is continued by our love for one another and God's for us. Jesus is the Incarnation of divine love for us, embodying in himself this relation willed by God. Thus by each other we should be continually be reminded of the love of God for us, a love in whose corporeality we share.

The Incarnation makes God personally and visibly present, not just in Jesus but in us all. Jesus, in assuming human form, divested himself of the privilege of divine glory. He did not empty himself of his divinity but of the status of glory rightly his. This voluntary renunciation was the humility of the Incarnation. We who would be his ambassadors must in turn give up our desire for status, recognition, and just deserts, loving our neighbors for their sakes rather than our own. We must pray for the humility to live our lives as an act of love, not as a performance; for if it is congratulations that we seek, then it is not Jesus whom we follow but some other God.

When we think of Halloween we probably think of trick-or-treating, merriment, and masquerading, knowing that behind each E.T. or Frankenstein mask is a person quite different from the mask they wear; we are not frightened by the Frankenstein mask because we know it for what it is. The reason the Incarnation has made every day a



"Happy Halloween!" is because every day Jesus comes to us wearing the mask of another person. Wearing us for masks, he comes to us disguised as friends, relatives, strangers--even enemies. Our duty as those hallowed by him is to recognize him, to see beyond the mask he wears to the reality of Jesus Incarnate in us all. If we cannot recognize and love him while we live, while he lives in others, we shall not be able to recognize him when we die, for we shall have become cross-eyed and blind with self-centeredness.

Peter Maurin spoke of the homeless poor as "ambassadors of God," and as other Christs made incarnate, such they are. But it is important not to romanticize even Jesus Incarnate, for often he is not radiant and titillating, only bore-some, irksome, and then some. We must connect in others with that which is of God. We do that by loving the Christ in each of us, knowing that we love everyone--including God--the same. We may think we love God or our family or friends more than others, but in reality we love everyone equally. It feels like we love some more than others because it pleases us more to be nice to them; usually we get a feeling of being loved in return or a self-congratulatory pat on the back. It is more gratifying to love some more than others, so we imagine we love them more. But love is not affection. It is choice and commitment. We may have no reason to like a person but we can choose to love them. If we choose not to--and such a decision we make even when we fail to notice them--we fail to love Christ who is incarnate in them. If we want to know how much love we have in our hearts for God or others we need only ask how much love we have for those persons whom we like least, for Jesus wears them for masks when he comes to us; and the degree to which we love our enemies is the degree to which we love God. So, Happy Halloween!

-tom merrigan





Fritz Eichenberg

Prostitution of Politics

The Republicans say:

"Let's turn the rascals out."

The Democrats say:

"Let's turn the rascals out."

The Republicans
call the Democrats
rascals.

The Democrats
call the Republicans
rascals.

For the Republicans
as well as
for the Democrats
politics

is just profitable business.
By making a business
out of politics
politicians
have prostituted
the noble calling
of politics.

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